IS VolumeSS1

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in the novel that came with BR/DVD 1

InfiniteStratos
インフィニット・ストラトス
IS
弓弦イズル
IZURU YUMIZURU
Blu-ray/DVD Vol.1
初回生産特典 書き下ろし小説❶
「キャット・テイルズ」

Chapter 1: Hit Up Summer!

"You've won the grand prize!"

Charlotte stood dumbstruck in front of the man ringing the bell.

In the shopping district close to the academy, Charlotte had just drawn a winning ticket.

"What's this? What's going on?"

"Ah, Laura. It looks like I won the grand prize."

"Oh? That's great."

Laura was accompanying Charlotte on the shopping trip, and despite not knowing what was going on, praised Charlotte with a "That's great".

"Now then! The grand prize is three free passes to this Spa Resort!"

Upon hearing the words "Spa Resort", Charlotte's eyes lit up.

"Huh? Do you mean the one that was recently built?"

"Yep! It's a place where you can enjoy baths from around the world! It's a mixed bathing resort, but no need to worry since you just wear swimsuits!"

"M-Mixed bathing..."

The first thing she thought of upon being told this, was indeed Ichika.

M-Mixed bathing.... Mixed bathing with Ichika.....

Charlotte imagined Ichika's handsome face through the steam of water.

Blushing, she took her prize and quickly turned towards Laura.

"L-Laura, would you like to go together?"

"Hm?"

♦

"Haaa... what am I going to do. I'm so nervous."

The time was 6:00PM, and Charlotte was in the first year's corridor of the IS Academy.

On the door in front of her hung the nameplate " Orimura" and Ichika was likely inside.

"What should I say to invite him...."

Once again, she repeated the simulation that she had went through many times already.

"Ah, Ichika. I won this, want to go together?"

"Oh, sure. A spa world that you wear your bathing suit to? I'll look forward to it."

"Ichika, you really do love baths don't you."

"No, what I'm looking forward to is being able to see Charl in a swimsuit."

"Huh?"

And then he embraces me, with a kiss...

"Yeah right, just kidding!!"

"Huh, Charl?"

Wha!?!?

"I-I-I-I-Ichika!?!?"

Suddenly, the door opened and Ichika appeared from inside.

As it was so sudden, Charlotte could not possibly be any more flustered.

Wha?..Umm.. What...What was it? Ahh.. ummm... kiss?

Of course not! It took almost 10 seconds for Charlotte to get her thoughts in order.

Charlotte once again faced Ichika.

"Ah, hey!"

"Hm? What is it?"

!

"F-Food!"

"Hm? Ah, dinner? We're going together?"

"Y-Yeah!"

Charlotte lined up next to Ichika and started walking, deciding to bring the topic up after heading to the cafeteria.

Charlotte shot quick glances over to Ichika beside her, which Ichika returned with a "Hm?". In a panic, she turned her face away from him.

Her face was colored a light pink.

"Ah, Orimura-kun! Yahoo~"

"Are you going to dinner now? Ah, so close. I should have gone a little bit later."

"Hey hey Orimura-kun, can I come by your room to hang out some time?"

Seeing Ichika pass by different girls in the hallway and exchange brief pleasantries with them, once again confirms Ichika's high popularity to Charlotte.

Ichika...he's too friendly to everyone.

It'd be better if he was only sweet with me...

Charlotte ever so slightly puffed out her cheeks as she thought selfish thoughts of her love.

"Charlotte, is something wrong? It kind of looks like you're in a bad mood."

"N-No, not really? It's nothing."

Charlotte couldn't believe that Ichika was able pick up on it, and couldn't hide her surprise at his inference.

Ichika is daft at crucial times, but he's sharp when it comes to the subtleties of people's feelings.

Whether to be happy or resentful over such a thing, Charlotte was in a complex state of mind.

They descended the stairs and headed to the cafeteria on the first floor.

"What are you having for dinner Ichika?"

"Hmmm.., I could go for the nirereba[S1A 1] lunch set."

"Liver huh...? That has a sort of manly feel to it."

"Haha, what's that supposed to mean?"

"It just gives that impression, jeez... you don't have to laugh at me."

"My bad, my bad. So, what about you Charl?"

"I'll have, hmmmm....."

Looking over the menu once again, Charlotte's gaze stopped on the flounder with red bean paste lunch set.

"I'll go with this, it looks good."

"Ahh, yeah it does. Trade some with me later."

"Ah, sure! I will!"

Is he going to feed me again!? "Here, aaaahhhnnn~" ehe... ehehehe....

In high spirits from imagining such a scene, Charlotte decided to strike while the iron was hot and quickly headed towards the counter.

Aahhhnnn~ with Ichika! Aahhnnn~ with Ichika!

Charlotte took her food and went to her seat in a half skip walking pattern.

"Charl."

"Yes!?"

"Here."

What Ichika was offering her was a single serving of nirareba on a small dish.

!

"....fine."

"?"

Why did they have to have those little serving dishes available today, jeez!!!!

As it would have been strange to complain in response to him, Charlotte placed some of her own food in one of the small dishes.

"Here."

"Thanks. Ohh...it has a good consistency to it, this looks great."

"....."

"Let's eat!"

"....."

"Charl, you're not going to eat?"

"I will."

"What is it? Maybe you want me to feed you again?"

"N-No way!"

Embarrassed by Ichika hitting the bull's-eye, Charlotte suddenly stood up.

"It was a joke! A joke."

"Ichika, you know there are both jokes you should say and those you shouldn't."

"I-I'm sorry."

"That's right, reflect on your actions!"

Sitting back down in her seat, inside her heart Charlotte was all balled up.

Aaaahhhh~ I'm so stupid, stupid....! I should have just said "Yes"!!!

Begin Delusion

"What is it Charl, do you want me to feed you?"

"Y-Yeah...."

"You're so spoiled."

"Only when it comes to you Ichika...."

"Sure sure, okay then, here, Ahhhnnn~"

"Ahnnnn."

"Ohhh, you got some sauce on your lips."

"Is that sooo?"

"You're so helpless, Charl."

"I-Ichika!? That's.. a kiss!?"

"Here, shush."

Nnnnmmmm....

End Delusion

"Mm! It's delicious! Here, you try it too Charl."

"Y-Yeah..."

Charlotte moved her chopsticks while praying that Ichika would somehow not notice that she was blushing once again.

"It's good."

"Right?"

"It has ginger or something in it right? Do you know Ichika?"

"Hmmm... I wonder, there's some hidden flavor in the flounder as well.

"Either way, it's so good! I want to be able to cook something like this."

"You're quite skilled Charl, you could probably pick it up pretty quickly."

!

"Y-You think so?"

"Yeah, the cupcakes you made recently were really good, right?"

"Ah, anyone could do that."

"No, no, that's not true. I think you have talent for cooking Charl."

"T-Thank you...."

Happy from being praised, Charlotte used those uplifting feelings as momentum and brought up the original question.

"B-By the way, Ichika. The day after tomorrow, want to go here?"

"Hm?"

Chapter 2: Fun in the Water

The blazing sun shined down upon us mercilessly.

At the end of August, I, Charlotte, and Laura were heading towards “Spa World”, the place Charlotte won tickets for the other day.

“It’s almost as if…the weather is too good today.”

“I know, but going to an onsen in the middle of summer could be oddly appealing.”

“Mhmm... the so called ‘wabisabi’”, Laura nodded.

By the way, up until a couple days ago, Laura thought wabisabi was a type of wasabi.

As usual, it seems there’s an informant providing wrong information.

“It's getting on sight!”

“Ohh!”

After switching from train to bus, followed by an hour long ride, we came to Spa World 'Enjoy Resort' at the top of a small hill.

A twenty floor hotel stood towering over the surroundings, and as it was just recently completed the exterior was in beautiful condition.

"It's quite crowded despite it being summer."

The tour bus that had been beside us sped off.

"Yeah, probably because they have pools here too."

"Oh, I see. So not all of this is an onsen then."

"Looks that way."

We headed to the front entrance and handed over our tickets.

The lobby looked like it was constructed to be large, but since it was summer vacation season, it was overflowing with people.

“Right then, how about we go get changed. Where do you want to meet up?”

“Hmmm... how about the ‘Meeting Palm Tree’ written on the map?”

“Gotcha. I'll be quicker so I'll be waiting there.”

“Mm... as my wife, you better wait carefully.”

“Laura.... don't go inviting strange misunderstandings, stop addressing him like that already.”

“Weaklings worry over what others see. Look at me! I'm a person without reservation!”

I understand what she's trying to say... but that's not the problem here.

But you know, that Laura seems to have taken a liking to calling me her wife, so she probably won't stop...

“Ok then, see you in a bit.”

“Okay.”

"Right."

I split off from Laura and Charlotte, and went into the men's locker room.

By the way, as this place was remodeled during a time when society favors women, the men's changing room was only around half the size of the woman's one.

I'm not really bothered by it or anything, but it's so confined that it is somewhat troubling.

Since the academy's on the coast, not having to go look for a new swimsuit is a welcome relief.

Going to the pool with the usual suspects so many times this summer will be an enjoyable memory.

Fortunately, in return for assisting with the IS equipment tests during the summer, I have a significant amount of disposable income. As such, my 'war funds' for today were plentiful.

All right, ready to go!

I quickly changed into my swimsuit, and headed towards the spa area.

“Ohhhh...”

This place is a mix of an onsen and theme park facilities, each being split into their own large area: an onsen area, a food area, and a pool area.

I could see ‘Onsens of the World’ written on a large sign from far away, and I instantly started to get hyped up to go in.

“Wait... first I have to get to the meeting place.”

I headed towards the ‘Meeting Palm Tree' that was next to the food area.

It just so happened to be the time where a lot of people were meeting up, so nearly twenty people were gathered there.

(Guess I'll check out the map while I can.)

Looking over it again, there’s a stage in the food area that looks like it’s used for special events.

I should say that 'stage' was in the shape of a gigantic sail boat, it was a quite a sight.

“Hey, look!!”

“Hm? … Aahhh!! Could that be Orimura Ichika!?”

“Uwaaa!! It's the first time I've seen him. I'll take a picture.”

“He looks better in person than he does on TV.”

The people who had taken notice of me suddenly started creating a fuss.

The other day, I was on the television program “ Orimura Ichika, The One Man in the World who can use IS!”

Incidentally, the ratings were quite good.

I remember getting a pack of sweets from the producer of the program as thanks.

Then again, becoming famous isn’t all that it’s hyped up to be.

I get treated as a target of girl's interest at school. It's troublesome getting this outside of school as well.

Laura and Charl could you get here a bit faster please?

As I was thinking that, I heard a different kind of commotion hit my ears.

"Whoaoaa!! What's with that beauty!!"

"Wowww... first time I've seen silver hair..."

"An actress, a model?"

"M-maybe I'll call out to her."

I looked over, and as I thought, Charlotte and Laura were there.

"Heeeyy... over here, over here!"

"Ah, Ichika!"

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

The two rushed over to me.

Looking closely, I see that the swimsuits they were wearing were different from the ones they wore at the seaside school.

Charl was wearing a light blue bikini. Laura was wearing a sporty grey one piece swimsuit.

They're probably the same brand, as "CAT&TAIL" was written on them.

The stitched emblem is a cat with a tail wrapped around it.

"Hey, looking good you two."

"Ehehe, really? Thanks."

"Hmph, of course."

Charlotte was happy, and Laura was overflowing with confidence.

Laura seemed so embarrassed during the seaside school too, that's some change of heart.

"Ahh! Those two are Orimura Ichika's girlfriends!?"

“Flowers in both hands!? I’m so jealous.”

“Ugggh... I was thinking of calling out to Orimura-kun ... I have no chance...”

“That figures, a good man has to have good women with him.”

As the centers of two different hot topics joined together, the noise around us grew louder.

“Waaa, amazing. There's even a slide in the wave pool. ”

“It looks like there's a volley ball court over there, with real sand as well.”

“There's a diving board also, I'll show off my skill later .”

As a result of our [one-shot] high tension discussion in the pool area, we decided to go the slide.

“Ah.”

Charlotte spoke up, suddenly remembering something .

"What is it?"

"It looks like you go down the slide in pairs."

"Heeey!"

"Right, we're going Ichika."

"Ahhh, that's not fair Laura. Rock paper scissors! We'll decide order with rock paper scissors!"

"Hmph, fine then. Just to let you know, rock paper scissors is among my strengths."

"You won't beat me."

Rock… Paper… Scissors!

"Yaaay! I won!"

"Grrr...."

The winner Charlotte flashed a full faced smile, and the loser Laura had a look of regret.

"Hmmm, so how are we supposed to go down this in a pair?"

As we had question marks over our heads a staff lady called out to us.

“The pair water slide right? Like this… you hold the girl from behind.”

“Ah, all right.”

I sit down in the entrance to the slide first.

“The girl sits down between your legs.”

“Like this..?”

With a bit of reservation, Charlotte sits down in between my legs.

“That's it. Then the guy squeezes the girl from behind. Squeeeze. Arms around the stomach!”

“Ah…ah... Right, you ready Charl?”

“R-ready whenever!”

For some reason, Charl gives me a forceful reply. Doing as the lady told me I hold onto her from behind.

“.....”

Ugh, don't go quiet on me Charl. It's embarrassing for me too.

Whether I want it to or not, I can feel the special softness of a girl’s body from the skin to skin contact.

Plus from being so close that I can feel her body warmth, my heart starts to pound.

“Finally, the girl has to hold onto the guys arms. Hold on tight! It's dangerous if you become separated midway through.”

“Y,yes.”

Charl gave another energetic reply, and squeezes onto my arms.

Feeling embarrassed that Charlotte might realize my heart was pounding, I hurry and check with the staff lady so we can take off.

"Ah... okay, are we all set now?"

"Yes, good to go! Have a nice trip!"

The staff lady pushes on my back.

"Ohh…ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

The beginning of the slide went by slowly, but we accelerated quickly into high speed.

I close my eyes as the water splashes into my face, which causes my arms to reactively tense up.

"Kyaaa.!?"

"S-sorry!"

We were sliding considerably fast, and there was no time to exchange words.

Reacting similarly to the way I did, Charl was gripping onto my arms much more strongly than at the start.

“Eh? Whaa!? A curve!?”

The centrifugal force pulls me around.

Once again my arms tense up, and at the same time, Charlotte’s position changes due to the force.

‘boing’

“Ah.....”

[!!!!!!!!!!!!]

I calm down after the momentary separation and my hands are directly touching Charl’s breasts.

“I-Ichika!!”

“Sorry!! It wasn't on pur----uwwaaa!!!!”

SPLASH

It appears that we reached the end of the slide and splash down into the water.

“Puhaaa!”

Coming out of the surface of the water, Charl stares at me with her arms crossed over her chest as if in a guard position.

“….....”

“Ah… uh.... sorry.”

“Ichika, you pervert.”

“!??! It wasn't on purpose! It was an act of god!”

“But... you touched them.”

“Ugh...”

Even so, there's nothing I can do about it now.

But, still...

They were soft....

…

Self-introspection.

“You're slow!”

The awkward atmosphere between us remains as we return to the entrance of the slide, Laura scolding us as she was very sick of waiting.

“Sorry.”

“Sorry about that.”

Charlotte and I quickly bowed our heads to her.

There was still an awkward atmosphere between me and Charlotte thanks to what just happened, so we ended up placing an odd distance between us.

“Hm? What is it? Did something happen to you two?”

“N,no!?”

“Nothing at all!?”

“?”

Laura made a suspicious looking face, and without saying anything more she hurried me over to the slide entrance.

Holding her like this, Laura does have the small body..
.

A delicate physique.

Her skin is so smooth... no, this is bad, let's hurry up and get going.

Beautiful silver hair and smooth skin, and not to mention the special touch of a woman assault my senses head on.

Anyway, I squeeze Laura in the same manner as I did Charl.

"You fool! Don't do it so tightly!"

"S,sure!"

"Ah… no… it's all right..."

"Eh?"

"Just do it! Hold onto me! That's an order!"

Maybe it's just my imagination, but it looks like Laura is blushing.

Indeed, even Laura would get nervous when she is in close contact with someone of the opposite sex.

I felt weird not being sure whether or not I wanted to know such a thing.

"All right then, have a good trip!"

The staff lady pushes my back once again, and Laura and I started sliding down.

Uuuuoohh?!? It really is fast…….

I close my eyes once again to the splashing water and harsh increase in speed.

After that Laura's water soaked hair starts to hit me in the face.

"Waaa!?"

This is bad, it actually kind of hurts!

To get control of her hair flying around, I embraced Laura's small body as if to conceal her.

"Wh-whaa-What are you doing!?"

"You'll bite your tongue if you talk!"

"Mm...mmm"

I realized that we were approaching the curve where Charl and I got separated at before, so this time I squeezed Laura even tighter so it doesn't happen again.

"Ah....uhhh...."

Oh yeah! We got through the curve! Did you see that!?

And then the final bend comes, after which Laura and I splash into the pool.

"……..."

Laura and I didn't separate upon the shock of hitting the water, so she remained in my arms.

So all I could do was princess carry Laura out of the pool.

"Ffuuuu..."

"....."

Laura looked like a timid and well-behaved cat in my arms.

"Something wrong? Does it hurt somewhere?"

"N,no...that's not it... that's not it...."

"Hm?"

"K-keep this up, a little longer...."

"Ah-ahh!! Laura! What are you doing!?"

"--!? L-let me go! Ichika!"

"Ohh?? What!? Don't get all violent all of a sudden!"

"Put me down! Down! Down! Down!"

"All right, all right already!"

What?????????

"Haa…haa...haa…"

"Laura, that's sneaky..."

"I-I didn't want that to happen! Ichika just went and did it on his own."

Eh? This is my fault!?

"Muuu---"

Charlotte was puffing her cheeks out. I guess she is upset.

"Okay! Let's take a break! I'll treat you to a drink, yeah ?"

"Fine, guava juice."

"I'll have the same as Charlotte."

"Right! Two guava juices then. Could you get a table?"

I moved out, as if to get away from Charl staring at me .

Adding in my portion, I ordered 3 guava juices at the drink bar, and headed back to them at a slow relaxed pace.

I pray this cheers them up...

"Welcome back Ichika."

"Ah, yeah."

I handed the juice over to Charl, who didn't appear to be angry.

After that, I handed the other one off to Laura and sat down.

"Ah, this is good."

"Really?"

"Yep, it's sweet but not too sweet, it's refreshing."

While feeling relieved from seeing Charl brighten up, I have a taste of the juice as well.

"Ah, this isn't so bad!"

"Hmph, certainly."

The three of us drank our juice in silence for a while.

While doing that, the PA system started up.

"Starting now, we are taking applications for participation in today's main event: the best couple contest. The couple who takes first place will enjoy a 3 day 2 night trip of leaf viewing during the Fall."

"Ichika!"

"Ichika!"

Charlotte and Laura stand up in unison.

"Let's enter!"

"We're doing this."

"Huh!?"

Chapter 3: (Sparkling) Fireworks are a Maiden's Color

How did it come to this…

Below the sign with "Best Couple Contest" written in gigantic letters, I stood with Charl on my right and Laura on my left.

"Um… Dunois-san and Bodewig-san, are you both forming a couple with this man…?"

Both of them said that they wanted to participate, and this is what happened.

Sure, the prize is quite appealing… but seriously?

It's probably not worth thinking that I don't necessarily have to participate in this contest in this way. Yeah… not worth it.

"Hey… Charl?"

"We are definitely going to win, Ichika!"

"Um… Laura?"

"If I take this seriously, winning the whole event will be no trouble at all."

"You know, both of you are representative candidates and you get a sizable wage for that, don't you? So what's the point of being so picky over this prize—"

"That isn't the issue here."

"That's not the problem."

...Is that so.

Disregarding me hanging my head sadly, the two take a step forward in an energetic manner.

"Hmm. To be honest, something like this is beyond my expectations…"

Yeah, see!? You're causing trouble for the lady hosting this event.

"But no matter, it seems interesting, so let's go with it!"

---What!?

The host lady flashed a victory sign with a smile towards the energetic crowd.

Wow, what an amazingly carefree person. The mood must be important for her.

“Now then, the best couple’s contest is starting! First up is the aquatic three legged race!”

This is like a competition…

“…What are you doing?”

“Ichika, you’re combining your right leg with mine.”

“Your left leg is with me.”

Laura and Charl quickly tie their legs with mine while speaking to me.

“Hey, wait! This isn’t ‘three legged’ anymore!”

“Nothing we can do about that.”

“Can’t help it.”

I wonder why, these two are supposed to be on friendly terms yet I can see fireworks sparking between them.

“Everyone, please get to your respective starting lines!”

Carefully walking along, we somehow make it to the starting point.

After which, exactly 10 seconds later, a pistol resounds signaling the start of the race.

“Start!”

“Let’s go, Ichika!”

“Go Ichika.”

“Hey, wait, wait— uwaahh!”

My left and right legs get pulled at simultaneously and I take a magnificent fall face down.

My face hits right into the water. It seriously hurts.

"What are you doing Ichika!"

"Ichika, what's with you!"

Eh. This is my fault?

"S-sorry…"

I should say that both Laura and Charl fell into the pool as well.

There's no way we could be able to run over the mats intended for two people to go with the three of us anyway.

The two get out of the pool ahead of me after skillfully removing the ties to their legs in the middle of the water.

"Special-couple team, unfortunately for you, that's last place."

That's alright, we're not aiming for the top place anymore… at least I'm not.

Maybe I'm a little disappointed, but I'll go with it just being my imagination.

I move towards the edge of the pool in order to climb out.

“Here, grab on Ichika.”

“You should hold on Ichika.”

At the pool side, both of them offer their hands to me at the same time.

One of them is definitely going to get mad here depending on who I choose…

“T-thanks.”

I grab onto both their hands and climb out of the pool, and the next event is already being announced.

“The next event is the love-love Frisbee throw! The couple with the best coordination between them and who can continue the longest wins!”

Oh… well, at least it doesn’t seem like anyone will get injured…

“Here Ichika!”

"Take this, Ichika."

Whoosh swoosh.

"Whaaaa!? Don't throw it at the same time you two!"

Somehow I managed to catch them in each of my hands, and throw them back one by one.

"Ichika, I'm increasing the pace so we can increase our count."

"I'm going faster."

"No, wait, wait!"

I manage to deal with the Frisbees flying at me. However, Charl and Laura at the same time unintentionally mess up their aim.

"Ah."

"Ahh."

Right and left, they are both way off.

To get these I have to…!

"Ahhh!"

I catch Charl's frisbee with my right hand, and Laura's using my left foot.

But obviously since I took such a big jump, I end up falling that way into the water.

"Haa…haa…haa…"

"Ichika, are you okay?"

"Yeah… I think."

"I see, there's the next match then."

"N-no. Let me rest… please."

"No."

"Not happening."

"….."

What the hell is with this!

After, a variety of contests are held, with me suffering each and every time.

And hey, 'Cabbage Cutting Contest' and 'Water Rocket Launching Contest', just what do those have to do with being a couple?

As far as Charl and Laura, or rather the representative candidates' physical ability was by far the best. Even with me weighing them down, in a nearly frightening way we had jumped into the top spot.

And then the final contest that would decide it all was announced.

"Here we go! We have reached the final contest in our competition! The final event is a competition involving the couple's level of happiness: shaved ice speed eating!

The shaved ice speed 'ahhhn' show down!

"What!?"

"If a man is fitting of his loving girlfriend, then he should be able to eat any amount of shaved ice! Participants please go over to the table now!"

I've got a bad feeling about this. No. I've got nothing other than bad feelings.

"Ichika."

"Ichika."

Gikun. Sound of surprise.

"Come on over here."

"Sit down here, Ichika."

Two evil demons are beckoning me! Ahh, I wish the nearly 10 servings of shaved ice that are already on the table is a mere illusion.

"Ichika, you aren't going to say no to doing this are you?"

Charl was smiling. I don't sense any ill will there, but it's become clear that it's a sensitive land mine.

"Ichika, you bastard, are you declining my invitation!?"

Laura took a criticizing attitude, or to put it better she was being honest. Frankly speaking, her honesty on this situation just causes me trouble.

It's like yelling "Why won't you get caught in the trap! " to a wild rabbit.

Ugghhhh.. I want to run away! I want to run away, but …!

This is what someone said long ago.

'If you run away today, you will need twice the amount of courage to fight tomorrow.'

Then if you run away tomorrow, the day after tomorrow will not come for all eternity…!

Yeah, that's a good line! It's cool! Right, I'm not going to run away!

So, I take a seat.

"Ready, start!"

Pow! The sound of the pistol echoes around.

"Ichika, aaahnnn."

"I'll f-feed you, ah…ahhnnn."

I have spoons of shaved ice held out at me from both sides. The strawberry flavor is somewhat of a relief, the melon flavor's not bad either.

'munch, crunch'

"Here! Here! Here!"

"Eat! No holding back!"

'mmmnggg!'

A rush of shaved ice gets poured into me in quick succession.

I've already past the stage of my mouth being cold and heaving a headache.

Breathe, I can't breathe!

"Laura, slow it down a little."

"What are you talking about? You're the one that should slow down Charlotte."

'Bang, crackle!'

Fireworks scatter between the two of them.

“Ichika!” “Ichika!”

Two heaping spoonfuls of shaved ice get shoved into my mouth at the same time.

“gueh..”

‘Thud.’

“Eh? Ichika…”

“What’s this. It’s too early to be sleeping.”

I collapsed from oxygen deprivation!

I yelled that in midst of my fading consciousness.

Chapter 4: At the End of Summer

Maybe that went a bit too far…

While reflecting on the idea that she let herself get carried away, Charlotte peered at Ichika sleeping on the bed.

"……"

Charlotte nervously looked around her.

The doctor suddenly got called away, and Laura went to go get drinks so she isn't around.

I should be all right for just a little…

The bed creaks from the added weight.

Charlotte slowly moved towards Ichika…

"nn….."

Surprised to awaken to a pleasant feeling, I experience a moment of haziness.

"Lala… La…"

Is this a… lullaby?

The sweet sound of the melody gently permeates into my body. In addition to that, my pillow is unusually soft and makes for a comfortable sleep.

What is this… it's so relaxing.

The feeling of my hair being softly caressed.

With my mind still unclear, I indulge myself in these sensations.

"You bitch! What are you doing!"

I open my eyes to a sudden piercing cry.

In the next instant, something forcefully pulls at my neck.

"L-Laura? You came back quickly."

"I can't leave you two alone! Ichika! How long are you going to sleep on Charlotte's lap!"

I realize what's going on now that she says so.

It would appear that Charl is giving me a lap pillow.

"Ah… ummm… Ichika, you see… this is…"

"Who cares about that! If you want a lap pillow then I'll give it to you!"

"Uwaa, Laura, don't pull him!"

What a horrible mess.

Assessing the Situation: Start

…

……

…

Assessing the Situation: Finished

"So, I lost consciousness and was carried here. After that, Charl kept an eye on me and Laura went out to get drinks."

While drinking the tea Laura bought for me, I look around at the others.

In the first aid room with their swimsuits on, it's kind of unusual.

"Charl."

"Y-yes."

"Laura."

"What is it?"

"Got something to say?"

"…"

"…"

The two were silent.

After a period of silence, they both lower their heads.

"I'm sorry."

"I was mistaken."

"Good. Besides, why did you take it so seriously?"

"Eh? Well, that's because … Laura…"

"W-what!? I was only competing against Charlotte!"

"Ah, sure sure. It doesn't matter."

It didn't seem like much would come out of hearing this, so I cut the conversation short.

"What time is it?"

"Umm... 4:00 PM."

"Gotcha, well let's get back to the Academy."

"Eh?"

"What do you mean 'eh'? It's a long way back, it'd be best to get going early."

"That's true but… mmm…"

Charl and Laura seemed unsatisfied. I have to do something.

"I got it, I got it. Let's have dinner out somewhere then ."

"Okay!"

I finish drinking my tea as I stare at them nervously fidgeting for some reason.

"Let's get changed then. We'll meet at the front gate."

. . .

Damn Charlotte, getting affection for herself alone.

Laura enviously thought back on the earlier lap pillow incident while getting changed, and stared at Charlotte.

I'm not really mad at her…I'm just going to need some sort of compensation from Ichika!

While thinking on what happened, Laura finished getting changed and got out of the locker room together with Charlotte who was also in plain clothes.

"Hey Laura."

"What is it?"

"Are you angry about before?"

"Not really."

"That's not true, you're in a bad mood."

"I am not!"

After realizing that she rose her voice without thinking , Laura covered her mouth with her hand, ashamed over what she had done.

All of a sudden, Charlotte embraced her.

"W-what are you doing!?"

"Cheer up! Okay? Okay?"

"Ehh, stop this. Enough, get away!"

"Ehehe~"

"Stop having fun!"

Charlotte smiled cheerfully as she hugged onto Laura.

"Because, I really do want Laura as a friend rather than a rival."

"Ugh…well, I admit I was overly persistent today."

"Mm, let's make up then."

"F-fine."

"Here, pinky swear it."

"We're going to take it that far!?"

Different people passing by turned their glances on the two making noise as they walked along, wondering what was going on.

Taking notice to the reactions of the people around them, Ichika came walking up quickly.

"Looks like you're having fun."

"Yep! I made up with Laura."

"Don't go saying strange things. We weren't really on bad terms or anything…"

"Really? Then let's hold hands as we walk."

"I refuse!"

Charlotte was smiling happily and Laura was not smiling whatsoever.

Looking at them, Ichika muttered 'I don't understand women' to himself.

"Ehehe, let's always be friends, Laura."

"Hm, hmph."

Laura's hand as she turns away was tightly grasped with Charlotte's, as if it represented the tight bond of their friendship and affection.

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